



# Herndon Police Department

## **-CRIME ALERT-**

5/28/2014

Regionally, there have been an increase in reports of vehicle airbag thefts. These incidents are spreading across Fairfax County and into Herndon. Suspects gain entry by smashing the vehicle window. Often, the vehicle alarm is first disabled. The targeted vehicles include Hondas, Nissans, Acuras, and Toyotas. These vehicles are targeted because of their popularity, meaning there is a bigger resale market.

Air bags have become a popular target to thieves who are able to resell them on the black market or internet sites. New airbags cost \$1,000 or more from a legitimate dealer, but can be purchased on the black market for \$50-\$200. Insurance industry statistics show that approximately 50,000 airbags are stolen each year, resulting in a loss of more than \$50 million to vehicle owners and insurance companies. Airbags can easily be removed in less than a minute and installed as "new" by illegitimate auto repair shops.

### **Safety Tips:**

- Lock your vehicle at all times and don't leave valuables inside.
- Park in a well-lit area or keep a light in the front of the home on.
- Always ensure that your vehicle alarm is working.
- Report any suspicious activity, such as unusual people/vehicles and loud noises, to the police.

### **Fraud and Theft Prevention Tips:**

The National Insurance Crime Bureau suggests the following tips to help avoid airbag fraud and theft:

- Use a reputable automobile collision repair shop that employs ASE-certified mechanics.
- Inspect the invoice to ensure the repair shop purchased the airbag from a manufacturer, dealer, or certified recycler
- If possible, inspect the airbag prior to installation. If new, it should be packaged in a sealed container from the manufacturer.
- The trim cover over the steering column should be the same color as the remaining trip interior. If not, it is an indication that the original airbag has been replaced.
- When you turn on your vehicle's ignition, a red SRS (Supplemental Restraint System) indicator should light up and flash in the instrument panel display, indicating the airbag system is activated. No SRS light indicates a problem with the airbag system that could result in no airbag activation

**REPORT all suspicious persons or activity to the police by calling the non-emergency number 703-435-6846.**

**For emergencies dial 911.**